

Sermon on the Mount: Oaths

Read: Matthew 5:33-37

Summary:

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus has been teaching the disciples the need to be distinctive. There are to be the 'salt of the earth' and the 'light of the world'. People should see their lives are different and 'praise your Father in heaven'

As a result of this passage and Matthew 23 some people have understood that Jesus was teaching that Christians should never take an oath – even in a court of law. However we must remember that there are many oaths recorded in the Old Testament and God appears to make some Himself.

In the New Testament Paul also indicates that God is his witness, the message is very serious - so believe it. When Jesus was asked under oath at His trial are you the Son of God – He confirmed it.

Jesus is therefore not teaching that taking oaths is always wrong: instead He is addressing a culture among the Jews where they could distinguish between oaths that you had to honour and those you didn't. It appears that the Pharisees and almost devised a system for lying and a way to get yourself out of doing what you said rather than honouring your word.

Jesus is teaching His disciples that He is looking for truthfulness. People should be able to trust what you say. We must be those who say what we mean and mean what we say!

Application:

Please select from the following questions and do not attempt them all. Encourage all to be honest and to take part. Make sure there is time to pray for one another;

1. What did God say to you on Sunday and what must you do as a result?
2. How truthful would your friends say you are? Why?
3. What stops you from doing what you say? How do you overcome this?
4. You may not lie, but in what other ways do you deceive people?
5. If God forgives us when we say sorry why does it matter that we tell the truth?
6. How have you felt when you discovered others lied to you? Have you been able to forgive them?
7. Is there any such thing as a 'white lie'? Can you think of an occasion when you should not tell the truth?